

IN THE CLAIMS:

In the event the examiner maintains the restriction requirement with regard to claims 1-11 and 21-22, applicants hereby cancel claims 1-11 and 21-22 without prejudice.

Please add new claims 23-38 as follows:

Sub G Claim 23. (new) The method as in claim 12, wherein the weakened tear pattern of the instrument panel cover is configured to separate under pressure generated by an inflating air bag cushion which is positioned proximate the inner surface of the instrument panel cover.

PO Claim 24. (new) The method as in claim 12, wherein the instrument panel cover is formed of a synthetic material.

Claim 25. (new) The method as in claim 12, wherein the instrument panel cover is formed of a thermoplastic material selected from the group consisting of a polyethylene based polyolefin elastomer and a polypropylene based thermoplastic elastomer.

Claim 26. (new) The method as in claim 12, wherein the at least one scoring device contacts the instrument panel cover prior to the setting of the instrument panel cover to form the at least one score therein.

Claim 27. (new) The method as in claim 26, wherein the temperature of the instrument panel cover is elevated to a temperature higher than the temperature of the formed instrument panel cover and the instrument panel cover is at or near the elevated temperature when said at least one scoring device contacts the instrument panel cover.

Claim 28. (new) The method as in claim 12, wherein the at least one score is formed by advancing a contact edge of the at least one scoring device into the inner surface of the instrument panel cover a predetermined distance toward the outer surface, the instrument panel cover being disposed in a mold device.

Claim 29. (new) The method as in claim 28, wherein the mold device comprises a female vacuum forming tool.

Claim 30. (new) The method as in claim 28, wherein the predetermined distance of the at least one score is controlled by limiting the advancement of the at least one scoring device into the instrument panel cover at the inner surface.

B1 Sub C² Claim 31. (new) The method as in claim 28, wherein the at least one scoring device comprises a scoring blade which forms apart of a moveable cylinder, the at least one scoring blade being expendable and retractable relative to the cylinder, the cylinder and at least one scoring blade being orientated above the body so that upon actuation thereof, the cylinder and at least one scoring blade are lowered to contact the body and form the at least one score.

Sub C¹ Claim 32. (new) The method as in claim 31, wherein the at least one scoring blade contacts the instrument panel cover to form the at least one score when the instrument panel cover is at a temperature wherein a portion of said instrument panel cover is deformable.

Sub C³ Claim 33. (new) A method for forming a hidden, integral passenger air bag door in a portion of an instrument panel cover, comprising:

vacuum forming the instrument panel cover having an inner surface and an opposing outer surface; and

forming a deployment region in the inner surface of the instrument panel cover by contacting the inner surface with at least one scoring device during the vacuum formation of the instrument panel cover creating at least one score therein, the at least one score defining the deployment region and providing a weakened tear pattern in the inner surface wherein the deployment of an air bag cushion causes the deployment region of the instrument panel cover to tear open along at the at least one score for deployment of the air bag cushion.

Claim 34. (new) A method for forming a hidden, integral passenger air bag door in a portion of an instrument panel cover, comprising:

applying a quantity of thermoplastic material to a vacuum forming tool;

vacuum forming the instrument panel cover having an inner surface and an opposing exterior surface; and

forming a deployment region in the inner surface of the instrument panel cover by contacting the inner surface with at least one scoring device during the vacuum formation of the instrument panel cover creating at least one score therein, the at least one score defining the deployment region and providing a weakened tear pattern in the inner surface wherein the deployment of an air bag cushion causes the deployment region of the instrument panel cover to tear open along at the at least one score for deployment of the air bag cushion, the deployment region being formed simultaneously or during the vacuum forming of the instrument panel.

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Claim 35. (new) The method as in Claim 33, wherein the deployment region is formed after the vacuum forming of the instrument panel but prior to the cooling of the instrument panel cover.

Claim 36. (new) The method as in Claim 33, further comprising:
applying a foam layer to said inner surface after the forming of the instrument panel cover and the deployment region; and
applying a substrate layer to said foam layer, said substrate layer having a plurality of scores aligning with the deployment region.

Claim 37. (new) The method as in Claim 36, wherein said substrate layer is formed by an injection molding process.

Claim 38. (new) The method as in Claim 33, wherein a portion of the scoring device is heated prior to the scoring of the inner surface.